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HOW DOES BEING PLACED IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION
SETTING AFFECT A STUDENT'S SELF-CONCEPT?

by
Kristin Fastiggi

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Kristin Fastiggi

HOW DOES BEING PLACED IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTING AFFECT A STUDENT'S SELF-CONCEPT?

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Dr. David Hespe

Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study was to compare the self-concept of classified and non-classified students. Twenty-four students, twelve classified and twelve non-classified, all from Gloucester County, were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The test consisted of ten statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The students were tested away from their peers and the test was administered by the researcher. Once the study had been carried out the scores were analyzed by the researcher. The non-classified group had an average score of 15.83 (a normal self-esteem is within the range of 15-25). The non-classified group had an average score of 23.42; a difference of 7.59 in relation to the classified group. The scores of the classified group were extremely close to the cut line of having a normal self-esteem whereas the non classified group's scores were almost above the cut line for above normal range. The results demonstrate that there is a significant difference between the self-esteem of classified and non classified students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature	5
Chapter Three: Methodology	19
Chapter Four: Findings	24
Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings and Recommendations	46
References	53
Appendix A: Parent Permission Form	55
Appendix B: Test	57

LIST OF CHARTS AND TABLE

Chart 1: Special Ed Question Breakdown	43
Chart 2: General Ed Question Breakdown	44
Table: Popular Answers for Both Groups For Each Question	45

Chapter One: Introduction

This study will be comparing the self-concept of students placed in a special education setting against students who remain in a general education classroom. In addition, it will include students who are seen as gifted and talented. Factors of changing self-concept will be determined and analyzed and what can be done to remedy the situation will be discussed after the study has been carried out.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to compare the self-concept of students who are placed in a special education setting versus those whose placement is in a general education setting.

Significance of the Study

Studies concerning self-concept, specifically the self-concept of students with learning disabilities, have been extremely prominent over the past few decades (Ribner, 1978). Giving importance to these studies is the fact that school environment plays a significant role in the development of one's self-concept. For latency aged students, ages seven to adolescence, school will usually be the first situation in which children act on their own and compare or measure themselves against their peers. However, family influence and interactions is usually where self-concept will begin to develop and will progress when entering school (Scott, 2001). As children advance through school they begin to pile on different responsibilities. They start to care about grades, relationships, and their future in general. For these reasons, it is reported that a child's self-concept will

diminish as they get older. These changes are caused by, at least in part, the way children process feedback about their cognitive performances. They also realize the emphasis on evaluations (Heyman, 1990).

As a result of that growing impact on evaluations, students with disabilities are suffering from low self-concept. Research has even verified this belief by stating that learning disabilities have been found to affect mental health, self-esteem, and social activities (Margalit, 1984). Special Education students often face academic failure, and therefore their self-concept is put directly at risk (Rogers, 1985). Children, specifically Learning Disabled students, who have experienced failure, humiliation, and rejections often experience low self-worth and a sense of vulnerability (Heyman, 1990).

Even though many studies have shown that classified students have low self-concept, there are studies that state the opposite; that special education students have high or average self-concepts. It is important for these studies to continue to help those students who do endure low self-concept. Is there a difference in the self-concepts of students with varied classifications and, if so, what can be done?

Research Questions

1. How does being placed in a special education setting affect a student's self-concept?
2. What are the differences in self-concept among special education and general education students?
3. What factors contribute to a lower self-concept?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that there will be a noticeable difference between the self-concept of special education and general education students.

Definitions

In order to establish a common meaning for certain terms in the text, I have defined them below.

Self-concept: The cognitive or thinking aspect of self (related to one's self-image) and generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence (Huitt, 2004 p. 1).

Self-esteem: The affective or emotional aspect of self and generally refers to how we feel about or how we value ourselves (one's self-worth). Self-concept can also refer to the general idea we have of ourselves and self-esteem can refer to particular measures about components of self-concept. Many use self-concept and self-esteem interchangeably (Huitt, 2004 p.1).

Optimism: The tendency to see the world as a benevolent (good things will probably happen) or malevolent (bad things will probably happen) (Huitt, 2004 pg.2).

Self-regulation: One's guidance of one's goal-directed thinking, attitudes, and behavior (Huitt, 2004 p. 1).

Self-transcendence: Going beyond or above the limitations of one's ego, meaningful connections to others, nature, universe, Creator, etc (Huitt, 2004 p. 2).

Limitations

According to Nancy Adler and Judith Stewart, with any kind of self-concept study the biggest limitation is their susceptibility to socially desirable responding. In addition, scores tend to lean towards high self-concept, with even the lowest scores exhibiting fairly high levels of self-concept. There is the suggestion that “an individual who fails to endorse a self-esteem scale must at least be moderately depressed” (Adler, 2004 p.4).

With this particular study there is also a smaller population being compared, therefore it will be harder to make generalizations.

Organization of the Thesis

Four chapters follow this first chapter. The second chapter will be the review of related literature. The third chapter describes the methodology of the study and how the study will be carried out. The context of the study is also discussed. Chapter four presents findings of the study once it has been carried out. The fifth chapter will conclude the study and answer any remaining questions. It also discusses the implication of the study for future educators.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Research has indicated for years that learning disabilities have been known to affect mental health, self-esteem, and social activities. Learning Disabled children often experience rejection, humiliation, and failure all of which attribute to a low self-worth. As a result of the growing concern for these children and their self-concept, several experiments have been conducted measuring self concept among learning disabled children themselves and between learning disabled and non-disabled students. There have been mixed results with these experiments. Some have concluded that despite a learning disability, students have maintained a positive self-concept. On the other hand, many studies have theorized the exact opposite, that a disability does indeed impact one's self-concept (Gans, 2003).

This Literature Review will discuss the instruments used in gathering information on self-concept. My study will use the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It will also discuss particular experiments in which these instruments were used and the findings of these studies. Each study examines self-concept between Special Education students and General Education students, as will my study. The findings produce answers that there is indeed a difference in self-concept between the two groups of students. The last section will discuss the questions that remain in this field of study.

There have been over 11,000 studies in the United States that are related to self-esteem and self-concept. According to author Bruce A. Bracken, self-concept is probably the most widely studied affective construct in all areas of education. In order for

researchers to prove their hypotheses, several instruments have been used by educators, counselors, and researchers to measure self concept. The instruments discussed below are commonly used and are historically recognized.

Self-Concept Instruments

There are several methods of collecting data related to self-concept. All of them ask a series of questions to the selected population. They focus on aspects of self-concept such as physical appearance, academic achievement, social acceptance, etc. Although very similar, a researcher must choose which particular method will be most beneficial in the data collection process. Some instruments are geared towards a certain population; older or younger, some have questions that may not be relevant to the population. In addition, some of the questions may not be on a similar reading or academic level as the population. The sections below will allow the reader to see what methods are available and what each scale entails

Coopersmith Self-Inventory

A series of fifty-eight forced-choice items that are to be used for either individual or group administration. The scale was designed as a measure of self-esteem with subdomains that reflect General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, School-Academic, and a Lie Scale. The Coopersmith manual defines self-esteem as “the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains of him or herself; that is an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes him or herself competent, successful, and significant and worthy.” (Bracken, 1994 pg.2) It is suggested that the Coopersmith Scale be used for individual or group screening,

instructional planning, program evaluation, and clinical or research studies (Bracken, 1994).

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

The Piers Harris scale consists of eighty forced choice items that are to be administered to an individual or a group. It was developed as a self-concept scale with subdomains that reflect behavior, intellectual/school, physical appearance/attributes, anxiety, popularity, and happiness/satisfaction. Piers defines self-concept as "a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attitudes" (Bracken, 1994 pg.2). This scale was intended for both research and clinical application (Bracken, 1994).

Sears Inventory

The Sears Inventory has students respond to forty-eight items. The subscales are: Physical Ability, Physical Appearance, Social Relations, Social Virtues, Happy Qualities, and Convergent Mental Abilities. In addition to these it measures, Divergent Mental Abilities, School Subjects, and Work Habits (Winne, 1982).

Harter Perceived Competence Scale for Children

The scale contains seven items that are weighted on a four point scale. Each item provides the participant with two alternative descriptions. For example, an item may be: "Some kids forget what they learn BUT other kids can remember things easily." The participant will then decide which statement best describes themselves. Once they have chosen a statement they give further detail by saying whether the statement is "Really true for me" or "Sort of true for me" (Coleman, 1992).

Studies on Self-Concept

The studies below demonstrate similar investigations as my study will. They all compare the self-concept of learning disabled students and general education students. Some of the studies add in other factors, but are still relatable to my topic. The purpose of these investigations is to prove my question that changes in self-concept do exist between these populations. The studies are organized into groups depending on what method of data collection was used. It is important to take note that despite what source of data collection was used, results still point to lower self-concepts in learning disabled children.

Piers-Harris Experiments

Self-Concept and Success-Failure Attributions of Nonhandicapped Students and Students with Learning Disabilities

An experiment conducted by Eric J. Cooley and Robert R. Ayres examined the differences in self-concept between a group of “normally achieving” students and a group of learning disabled students. The specific goal was to observe differences in a range of aspects of self-concept to see which aspects differentiate the two groups of students, and to determine if global differences are indeed global or a result of academic self-concept differences (Cooley, 1988).

The goals of the study were: (1): to investigate differences in self-concept between students with learning disabilities and nonhandicapped students. (2): to investigate differences between attributions made by students with learning disabilities and those made by nonhandicapped students when explaining success and failure (3): to examine the relationship between self-concept and the attributions used by the students (Cooley, 1988 p 175).

The subjects that participated in this experiment were 93 Caucasian children, 49 males and 44 females ranging from age 10 to 14 years old. The participants all had to receive parental consent in order to participate. All students were from six schools located in Western Oregon. The subjects included 47 nonhandicapped students, 22 males and 25 females, and 46 students with learning disabilities. The nonhandicapped students were selected from regular classes at the same schools that the students with learning disabilities attended (Cooley, 1988).

The instrument used to measure self-concept was the Piers Harris Self Concept Scale. The subjects were presented with 80 self descriptive declarative statements. The statements were worded in both positive and negative language to control for social desirability response sets. The questions are written on a third grade reading level. There were six cluster scales that reflected different aspects of self-concept: "Behavior" that reflects the extent to which the child admits or denies problematic behaviors. "Intellectual" and "School" reflected the child's self-assessment of his or her abilities with respect to academic tasks. "Physical Appearance" and "Attributes" that reflected the child's concerns with his or her physical characteristics and leadership attributes. "Anxiety" reflects general emotional disturbance. "Popularity" reflected the child's assessment of his or her popularity with classmates. "Happiness" and "Satisfaction" reflected a general feeling of being happy and satisfied with life (Cooley, 1988).

The results of the experiment showed that children with learning disabilities reported significantly lower self-concept scores than nonhandicapped students. There was also a difference in global self-concept between these groups of students, but statistical analysis indicated that this difference was largely due to the academic component. The

students with low self-concept also reported that, in terms of school performance, they were more likely to explain their success as being caused by external factors, and were more likely to explain their failures as being due to lack of ability rather than lack of effort (Cooley, 1988).

Comparing the Self-Concept of Students With and Without Learning Disabilities

This study compared students with Learning Disabilities (LD) and students without Learning Disabilities in terms of self-concept. The hypothesis was that children with LD would score lower on the measurement scales than the nondisabled students. In addition, researchers also thought that children with LD would not differ in their global concept from children who were not classified as LD. The last prediction was that girls with LD would have lower self-concept than boys with LD (Gans, 2003).

124 students were chosen from a large middle school in the Southeast. There were 50 participants classified as LD, 29 boys and 21 girls. In addition, there were 74 non-LD students, 33 boys and 41 girls (Gans, 2003).

The participants were given The Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. The students completed the 80 item by responding yes or no to the statements. Like the previous study there were six domains in which the students were questioned (Gans, 2003).

The results of the study concluded that the researchers primary hypothesis was supported which was that children with LD scored significantly lower on the Piers Harris scale than students without LD. The second hypothesis, that students with LD would not have a lower global self-concept than their peers was also confirmed. This means that students with LD did not generalize their feelings of academic weakness to more generalized self-concept perceptions. However, the last hypothesis that girls would score

lower than boys was proven false. There was no difference between boys with LD and girls with LD as far as self-concept was concerned (Gans, 2003).

Learning Disabilities and Giftedness: Identification Based on Self-Concept, Behavior, and Academic Patterns

The purpose of this study was to broaden insights into interplay among the academic, self-concept, and behavioral variables within the learning disabled and gifted child (Waldron, 1987).

Subjects of this study included 24 boys and 24 girls living in San Antonio, Texas. Twenty four of the students were classified as either disabled or gifted. The remaining twenty four students were normally achieving students (Waldron, 1987).

The participants were given the "How I Feel About Myself" children's self-concept scale (Piers Harris Scale). The instrument consisted of 80 first person declarative statements. As with previous studies there were six subdomains that were questioned (Waldron, 1987).

The results concluded that the variable subjects exhibited lower self-concepts than the control group. The gifted students seemed to be at risk for developing low self-esteem and feelings of rejection. The experimental students also tended to rate themselves as more anxious and as more personally dissatisfied than did the control group (Waldron, 1987).

Self-Concepts, Locus of Control and Performance Expectations of Learning Disabled Children

The investigation done pertaining to this study was to determine whether or LD students differed from non-LD students in general and academic self-concept, general

and academic locus of control, and academic performance expectations. The second investigation was to determine whether differences occurred with respect to these variables when children were newly enrolled into special education programs compared with students who had been placed in these setting for more than one-half year (Rogers, 1985).

Ninety children, 60 males and 3 females, aged 7-12 years old participated in this study. 45 of the subjects had been classified as LD while the remaining students were normal achievers. The LD group was receiving part-time resource room programs. 35 of the LD students had more than one-half year of experience in such programs. The normally achieving students were said to be, by instructors, of average ability and functioned normally in school (Rogers, 1985).

Self concept was measured by the Piers Harris scale, academic self-concept by the Student's Perception of Ability Scale, locus of control by the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale, academic locus of control by the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire, and academic performance by the Projected Academic Performance Scale (Rogers, 1985).

The results of the investigation led to the belief that learning disabled children were significantly more negative than normal achievers. Among the affective variables, only general and academic locus of control and academic self-concept were found to be important predictors of the extent to which LD students were successful in their academic placements. LD students with an external locus of control and high academic self-concepts were more successful than students with an internal locus of control and low academic concepts (Rogers, 1985).

As far as length of placement, it was concluded that LD students recently enrolled in a special education placement were significantly differentiated from those with over six months of experience in a special education placement. However, the research did not provide evidence that special education placement has a positive impact on the affective variables of concern to the investigation (Rogers, 1985).

Sears and Coopersmith Experiments

The Self-Perception of a Learning Disability and Its Relationship to Academic Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

This study was designed to determine whether self-perception of a learning disability was related to a student's academic self-concept and self-esteem. According to the researchers, self-perception is defined as how the children view their learning problem, with particular emphasis on whether they understand it as delimited rather than global, modifiable rather than permanently limiting, and not stigmatizing (Heyman, 1990 p. 472).

The hypotheses were that LD students' self-perception of their learning disability would be positively related to both academic self-concept and self-esteem. In addition, that these relationships would remain significant after eliminating factors such as race, sex, age, class setting, etc (Heyman, 1990).

The participants were 87 children classified as LD. They were in grades ranging from third to sixth grade from New York public elementary schools. The students were placed in either a self-contained room or a mainstreamed classroom (Heyman, 1990).

Self-esteem was measured using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. This scale consisted of a 25 item test. It is described by its users as appropriate for use with

LD students. Testing took place either individually or in small groups consisting of two to eight children (Heyman, 1990).

The findings confirmed the belief that there was indeed a relationship between self-perception of a learning disability and academic self-concept and self-esteem. It was also hypothesized that these conclusions would remain the same after controlling for specific factors. The hypothesis was correct. The relationship remained the same (Heyman, 1990).

Comparability of Self-Concept Among Learning Disabled, Normal, and Gifted Students

The purpose of this experiment was to examine self-concept in groups of LD, normal, and academically gifted students. Students participating in the study were classified by their school district as either LD, normal, or gifted (Winne, 1982).

To measure self-concept two scales were used: the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Sears Self-Concept Scale. The Coopersmith inventory consist of 58 statements such as; "I'm popular with kids my own age." Students would then respond using the choices "Like me" or "Unlike me". The Sears inventory asked students to respond to 48 items like "being a good student" on a five point scale comparing themselves to their classmates (Winne, 1982).

The results of this study concluded that LD students reported lower self-concept with respect to academic performance. Using the Sears inventory, it was determined that the gifted students showed lower self-concept on several factors. Researchers claim that this could be related to their contact with their peers. However, there was evidence that

the LD students could have exaggerated their answers. Further research will be needed to weed out those factors (Winne, 1982).

Child Anxiety Scale Experiment

Anxiety and Self-Concept of Learning Disabled Children

The purpose of this study was to compare self-concept and anxiety in LD children and non-LD students. As a result, of anxiety being subject related, it was suggested that LD students will demonstrate higher levels of anxiety than their peers (Margalit, 1984).

Two groups of students were chosen for this study ranging from 6-13 years old. 100 LD children participated in the study and 118 normally achieving students also participated. The Child-Anxiety Scale was administered to each of the students. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements to which the students responded yes or no. It measure two factors known as "Pawning-related anxiety" and "Competency-related anxiety" (Margalit, 1984).

The results were conclusive with the hypothesis. The LD group experienced higher levels of anxiety than the control group. They believed that events in their lives were beyond their control. Researchers described their feelings being like pawns in a game. The LD students also expressed lower levels of self-concept in relation to their peers (Margalit, 1984).

Harter Perceived Competence Scale Experiments

Similarities in the Social Competencies of Learning Disabled and Low Achieving

Elementary School Children

This experiment wanted to compare the social competencies of LD children to other lower achieving children. 85 students from Los Angeles were chosen to participate

in the study, all of whom had a LD. There was also another group of 85 children to serve as the control group. These students, specifically LD and LA students, were considered academic matches if their achievement scores differed by no more than five points (Coleman, 1992).

The children's perceptions of their own social competence were measured by the Harter Perceived Competence Scale for Children. Each item on the questionnaire was read aloud to the students as they completed the task individually (Coleman, 1992).

The results of the investigation concluded that there were few differences between the self-concept of LD and LA students. The LD students in this study easily compared themselves with other lower achieving students. The LD students in this study were also reported to be better liked by normally achieving peers than LA students were (Coleman, 1992).

Self- Perceptions, Motivation, and Adjustment in Children with Learning Disabilities: A

Multiple Group Comparison Study

This study examined aspects of motivation and perceived control in different groups. It was hypothesized that students with LD would be lower in self-regulation and more likely to perceive others as controlling success and failure outcomes relative to a non-LD group (Grolnick, 1990).

Subjects in this study consisted of 148 third through sixth grade students. 37 children, 25 boys and 12 girls, composed each of four groups: LD matched IQ non-LD, randomly selected non-LD students, and LA non-LD students. Each subject was to complete the Harter Perceived Competence Scale. The 28 item questionnaire assesses the

student's feelings of competence in three areas: cognitive, social, and physical (Grolnick, 1990).

The results of the study were as followed: Children with LD were more likely than the matched control group and significantly more likely than the LA group to see control of success and failure outcomes in the hands of others. It was also concluded that students with LD see themselves as less competent than the matched IQ group. However, the academic self-concept of the LD group did not significantly differ from that of the LA group (Grolnick, 1990).

Questions

What these experiments mean for the educational community is that there are many proven points related to special education and self-esteem, but many questions are left unanswered. It is important to continue research on special class placement and self-concept. There should be investigation into what exactly causes feelings of inadequacy rather than limiting it simply to a student's placement. Why are gifted students feeling lower levels of self-concept? Why are Learning Disabled students, in some cases, worse off as far as self-concept is concerned? What interventions can be made as to not have students feel inadequate? These experiments have either proved or disproved their theories, but have not opened a door to a next step. The main question is what can be done next?

My investigation will echo the previous ones, attempting to prove once again the differences in self-concept in learning disabled and non-classified students. In addition, I will look at the self-concept of students who are gifted and talented and students who are

classified, but not placed. I will attempt to uncover the underlying factors in the changes in self-concept and, from there, develop solutions as to how to remedy the situation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Context of the Study

Description of the Setting: The study will take place at Pine Oaks Elementary School located in Gloucester County.

At this school, a variety of remedial programs are available for regular classroom students who exhibit a need for additional help in specific subject areas. Some of these programs are mandated by law, while others have been developed by the district itself.

Supplemental Reading Program and Basic Skills

The supplemental Reading Program is available to students who are experiencing difficulty in the area of reading. Instruction is provided by a certified reading specialist on both a long and short-term basis, either as an in-class or pull-out program. The Basic Skills Improvement Program (BSIP) is a state and federally funded program for students in grades K-8 who need help with mathematics, reading, or language arts. Only those students who perform below the state cut-off level on either a standardized or teacher developed test are eligible for BSIP instruction. On the average, students remain in this program one to two years, exiting the program when their academic performance rises to a level above the state cut-off.

Special Education

The district provides a range of services to children with special needs. This includes self-contained classes for neurologically, emotionally, and perceptually impaired

students, as well as for handicapped preschoolers. Classified students are main-streamed into the regular classroom by way of in-class support programs such as those provided by the resource enter teachers.

The district's five child study teams are each composed of a psychologist, a social worker, a learning disabilities consultant. It is the job of the child study team to conduct evaluations of student progress and set up appropriate learning programs for special education students. Classified students whose needs cannot be met within the district are transported to other schools in the South Jersey area. For some students, an extended summer program is available to support their needs on a year round basis. It is the goal of the district to someday be able to provide learning programs for all special education students at their neighborhood schools.

Within the school district, a third grade general education teacher and, a resource room teacher, will provide participants from their classes to take part in the study.

The average third grade class size, as of 2004, was 24.4. Thirteen percent of the school's students are students with disabilities; with an average of ten students placed in a special education classroom. Out of the whole population of each classroom, no more than six to ten students will be chosen as participants.

Population of Study

The sample was selected based on my Student Teaching placement. My placement will allow me to be placed with both general education and special education students. I will observe the actions and behaviors of both sections. From that gathered

information I will chose those students who will benefit from the study. As a result of the Resource Room students ranging from grades 2-5, different areas of self-concept can be evaluated. Depending on the situation and the availability of students for the study, the General Education third graders could be compared to the Resource Room's third graders. Another comparison could be conducted using upper elementary school students, not involving grades K-2. Finally, all students regardless of their grade levels could be compared for the study.

Description of Research Paradigm

The study will be a qualitative study. It will take place in a natural setting, enabling me to develop a level of detail about the students as well as be involved in the experience. This method will allow me to have participants be a part of the data collection process.

Through interviews, surveys, observations of the participants I hope to not only build a trusting rapport with them, but be able to obtain the most accurate data. With a qualitative study, I may have to adapt my method of research based on the population. Questions or the setting may have to be changed in order to best adapt with the population in order to receive accurate information. Once the data has been collected, using a qualitative study, I will have to interpret the data as the sole researcher. In this case, interpret means to describe the setting and population of the study, analyze themes or categories, make conclusions and develop further questions to be asked.

The qualitative method will work best for this study because it is best if the study is done in an environment relevant to the study; in this case the classroom. It also

important that the participants take part in the data collection. With this study students will be asked to answer a series of questions based on their self-concept, thus their participation is imperative to the results. As previously mentioned it will be possible to adapt the questions and/or setting to allow for better results. Because this study is a comparison study, having the researcher analyze the data, allows for an accurate description of the study and population, as well as an accurate interpretation of the data. In addition, because the researcher is so involved in the process, further questions and concerns will be easier to conclude.

Data Sources

The first method of data collection will be through simple observation. I will observe the actions and behavior of the students in each classroom and record my observations in my Teacher Research Journal. From analyzing the observations I will determine the population for the study. Prior to administering the test, parent permission forms were sent out to the parents or guardians of the students stating whether or not they wished to have their child participate in the study. (See Appendix A) Once the population has been selected I will administer the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale, which is as follows: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. (See Appendix B) It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The SES has also been administered as an interview of eighty forced choice itemed interview/survey that are to be administered to an individual or a group.

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on the assumption that special education students will exhibit a lower self- concept than those students who are not classified or seen as gifted and talented.

The limitations of the study include time to conduct the study, biased answers, and the size of the population. Because student teaching is only sixteen weeks long it does not allow for much time to observe, analyze observations, chose a population, analyze the data, and form a conclusion. When conducting the Self-Concept series students could give biased answers based on what they think is the right answer rather than how they truly feel. Finally, parent permission must be obtained before conducting the study. If parents do not permit students to participate the sample could be very small, therefore not allowing for much comparison.

Chapter Four: Findings

Description of the Population

In order to collect data, students were observed and then chosen to participate based on willingness and ability. All students were from Pine Oaks School located in Gloucester County New Jersey (names and locations have been changed to secure students' identity). The selection process began by the researcher and the students' instructors observing and taking notes as to who exhibited noticeable changes in self-esteem based on their academic placement. Special attention was given to how students reacted to school work and how they interacted with peers. Because the test was going to be given by the researcher and away from the participants peers it was necessary to select students who felt comfortable with the researcher. Parent permission forms were sent out to fifty students detailing the purpose of the study and how it was to be carried out. However, only a little more than half of the permission slips were returned. In addition, not all parents gave their consent. For the sake of keeping the numbers equal, twelve classified students and twelve general education students were chosen to participate in the study.

The special education population included students in second to fifth grade as were the general education students. The study did not require a focus on diversity. Students were chosen based on observation of the relationships between behavioral and academic patterns, and their ability to participate in the study. The special education students were all classified as Learning Disabled. Out of the general education students

two students were Gifted and Talented. The students were given letters to represent their identify, without giving their name, and to identify their placement. The classified students received letters A-L, and the general education students were given M-X.

The students were administered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem test. As previously mentioned, the students were tested individually by the researcher. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The results are scored by allowing a given number of points for each question and the answer that goes along. For items 1,2,4,6, and 7 if the participant answers strongly agree they receive three points, if they simply agreed with answer two points were given, one point for disagreeing, and zero points for strongly disagreeing. For items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 the scoring is reversed allowing three points for strongly disagreeing and zero points for strongly agreeing. The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

Once all students were tested their scores were analyzed based on the scoring procedures set forth by the Rosenberg Scale. For each question a certain number of points are rewarded depending on the answer. For example, for items 1,2,4,6, and 7 if the participant answers strongly agree they receive three points, if they simply agreed with the answer two points were given, one point for disagreeing, and zero points for strongly disagreeing. For items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 the scoring is reversed allowing three points for strongly disagreeing and zero points for strongly agreeing. The scale ranges from 0-30.

Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

The students were tested over approximately a two-week period. After calculating the scores the results were as followed:

Answers/Test Scores of the Participants

Student A had an overall score of 16 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student A:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Agree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Agree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student B had an overall score of 16 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student B:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student C had an overall score of 12 which is below the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student C:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Agree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Agree

Student D had an overall score of 16 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student D:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Answer: Strongly Agree
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
Answer: Strongly Agree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
Answer: Agree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
Answer: Strongly Agree
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Answer: Strongly Agree
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Answer: Agree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Answer: Agree
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
Answer: Strongly Disagree
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.
Answer: Strongly Agree

Student E had an overall score of 22 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student E:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
Answer: Strongly Agree
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Answer: Agree
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
Answer: Disagree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
Answer: Strongly Agree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
Answer: Strongly Disagree
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Answer: Agree
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Answer: Agree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Answer: Disagree
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
Answer: Agree
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.
Answer: Disagree

Student F had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student F:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Agree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Agree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student G had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student G:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Agree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student H had an overall score of 11 which is below the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student H:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Agree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Agree

Student I had an overall score of 15 which is at the lowest end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student I:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Agree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student J had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student J:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student K had an overall score of 12 which is below the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student K:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Agree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Agree

Student L had an overall score of 16 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student L:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Agree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student M had an overall score of 24 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student M:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student N had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student N:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student O had an overall score of 24 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student O:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student P had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student P:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student Q had an overall score of 29 which is above the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student Q:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Strongly Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student R had an overall score of 18 which is in the lower end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student R:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Answer: Agree
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Answer: Agree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Answer: Disagree
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
Answer: Disagree
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.
Answer: Disagree

Student S had an overall score of 24 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student S:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
Answer: Strongly Agree
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Answer: Agree
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
Answer: Strongly Disagree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
Answer: Strongly Agree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
Answer: Strongly Disagree
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Answer: Agree
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Answer: Agree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Answer: Disagree
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
Answer: Disagree
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.
Answer: Disagree

Student T had an overall score of 24 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student T:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
Answer: Agree
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Answer: Agree
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student U had an overall score of 21 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student U:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student V had an overall score of 25 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student V:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Student W had an overall score of 28 which is above the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student W:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Strongly Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Strongly Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Strongly Disagree

Student X had an overall score of 20 which is in the higher end of the normal range (15-25). The given responses were:

Student X:

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Answer: Agree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Answer: Agree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Answer: Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Answer: Agree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Answer: Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Answer: Agree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Answer: Agree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Answer: Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

Answer: Disagree

10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

Answer: Disagree

Mean Scores for Classified and Non-Classified Students

The classified group, A-L, scores were 16, 16, 12, 16, 22, 18, 18, 11, 15, 18, 12, and 16. All but two scores were within the normal range, although most scores were close to the cut line for seven out twelve. Most students scored either 16 or 18, which represent scores just slightly above the cut-off score of 15. The overall average was 15.83.

The non-classified group, M-X, scores were 24, 18, 24, 18, 29, 18, 24, 24, 21, 25, 28, and 20. All scores were within the normal range. The two highest scores, 28 and 29, were the scores of the two Gifted and Talented students. The average score was 23.42. There was a difference of 7.59 points between the groups. Although as a collective

whole all scores were within the normal range the mean score for the non-classified group was 23.42 which is significantly higher than the mean score of 15.83 for the classified students.

Question Response Breakdown for the Classified and Non-Classified Groups

The question breakdown allows one to see the differences in the answers between the two groups. For the first question, “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others”, the classified group responses were, five strongly agreed, three agreed, two disagreed, and two strongly disagreed. The non-classified group had five students who strongly agreed, six who agreed, one disagreed, and no one strongly disagreed to the first question.

The second question, “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”, the responses for the non-classified group were, three people strongly agreed, five agreed, three disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. The classified group’s responses were five strongly agreed, seven agreed, zero disagreed, and zero strongly disagreed.

Question number three’s replies to “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure”, were, two strongly agreed, two agreed, seven disagreed, and one strongly disagreed for the special education group. The non classified population answers were, zero strongly agreed, zero agreed, five disagreed, and seven strongly disagreed.

When answering question four, “I am able to do things as well as most other people”, five strongly agreed, one agreed, five disagreed, and one strongly disagreed in the classified group. The non classified group’s answers were two strongly agreed, six agreed, four disagreed, and zero strongly disagreed.

For question five, “I feel I do not have much to be proud of”, three strongly agreed, five agreed, two disagreed, and two strongly disagreed in the classified group. Zero strongly agreed, zero agreed, six disagreed, and six strongly disagreed in the non classified group.

Question six’s responses to” I take a positive attitude toward myself” were two strongly agreed, three agreed, six disagreed, and one strongly disagreed in the classified group. Four strongly agreed, six agreed, two disagreed, and zero strongly disagreed in the non classified group.

Question seven, “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”, had the following answers: zero strongly agreed, six agreed, six disagreed, and zero strongly disagreed in the classified group. One strongly disagreed, eight agreed, three disagreed, and zero disagreed in the non-classified group.

For question eight which read, “I wish I could have more respect for myself”, two strongly agreed, six agreed, four disagreed, and zero disagreed in the classified group. The non classified group’s responses were zero strongly agreed, zero agreed, nine disagreed, and three strongly disagreed.

Question nine’s responses to the statement, “I certainly feel useless at times”, were zero strongly agreed, six agreed, five disagreed, and one strongly disagreed in the classified group. The non classified group responses were zero strongly agreed, zero agreed, six disagreed, and six strongly disagreed.

The last question, “At times, I think I am no good at all”, was answered one strongly agreed, three agreed, seven disagreed, and one strongly disagreed in the classified group. The non-classified group’s last responses were, zero strongly agreed,

zero agreed, six disagreed, and six strongly disagreed.

Chart 1 shows the question breakdown for the classified group. The question number and the number of responses correlate to illustrate how many students answered a particular question. Strongly agree is shown in blue. Agree is shown in red. Yellow represents those who Disagreed, and those who Strongly Disagreed is shown in green.

Chart 1

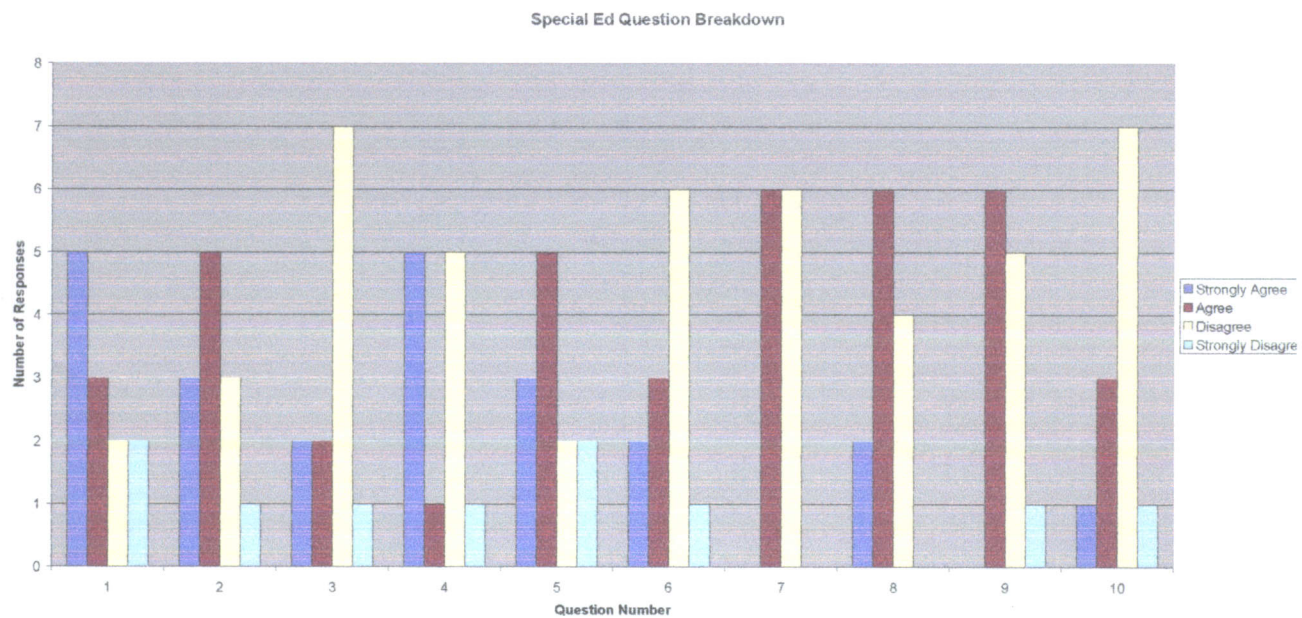
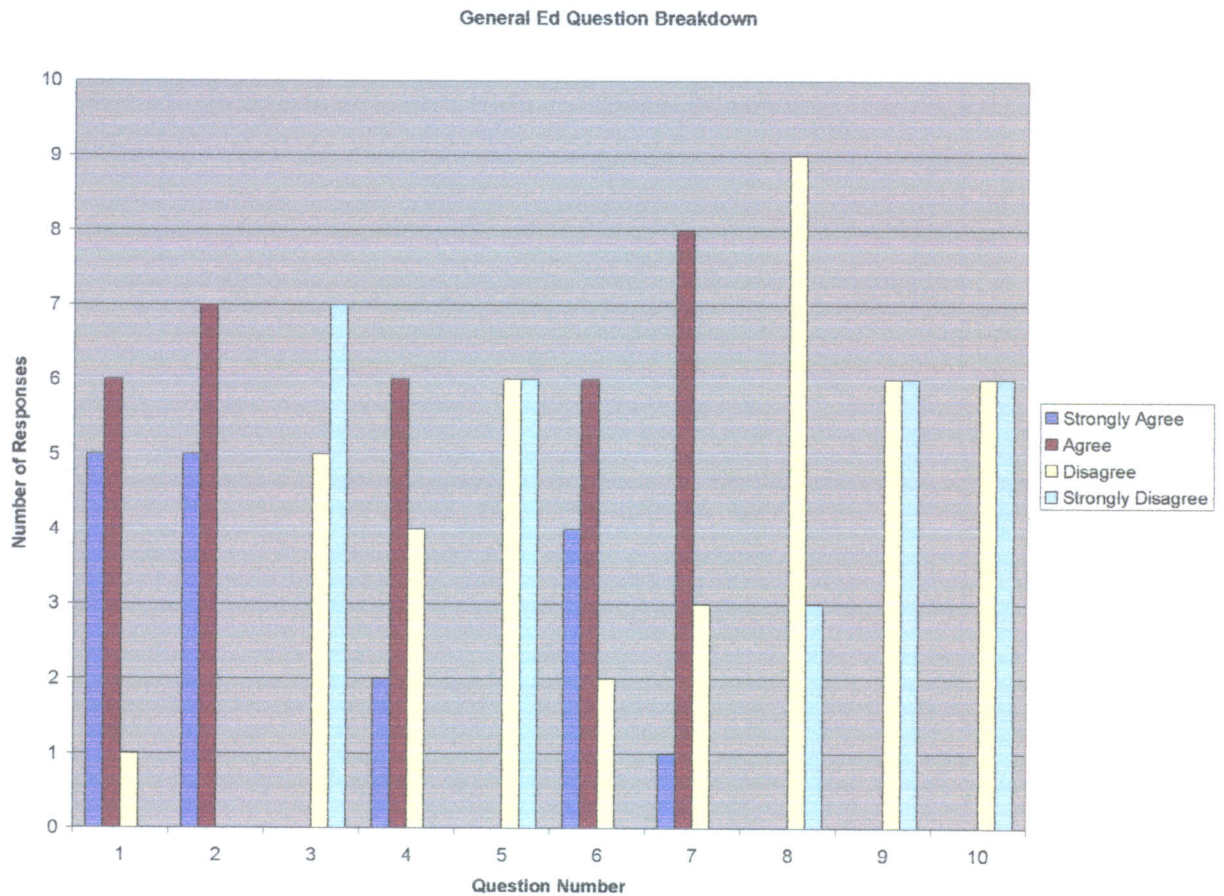


Chart 2 shows the question breakdown for the non-classified group. The question number and the number of responses correlate to illustrate how many students answered a particular question. Strongly agree is shown in blue. Agree is shown in red. Yellow represents those who Disagreed, and those who Strongly Disagreed is shown in green.

Chart 2



The most popular answers for both groups for each question can be seen in the Table below:

Table: Popular Answers for Both Groups For Each Question

Question	Special Education Group	General Education Group
One	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (6)
Two	Agree (5)	Agree (7)
Three	Disagree (7)	Strongly Disagree ((7)
Four	Strongly Agree(5) Disagree(5)	Agree (6)
Five	Agree (5)	Disagree(6) Strongly Disagree(6)
Six	Disagree (6)	Agree (6)
Seven	Agree(6) Disagree(6)	Agree (8)
Eight	Agree (6)	Disagree (9)
Nine	Agree (6)	Disagree (6) Strongly Disagree (6)
Ten	Disagree (7)	Disagree (6) Strongly Disagree (6)

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

This study was completed in order to decide whether or not self-esteem and academic placement are related. Specifically, does being placed in a special education setting affect a student's self-concept? As this is a comparison study, two groups, a group containing classified students, and a group with non-classified students, were selected to participate in the study. Upon gathering results from observation and teacher suggestion, twenty four students, twelve special education and twelve general education students, were selected to participate. Each student was given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The results are scored by allowing a given number of points for each question answered correctly. For confidentiality purposes the students were given a letter to represent their identify. The special education students were given the letters A-L. The general education students were given M-X. Students were also tested away from their peers to attempt to ensure that peer influence would not affect the results.

The results proved that there is indeed a difference in the self-concept between special education students and general education students. However, the results also proved that the special education population, with the exception of two students, was still within the normal self-esteem range, although the mean for this group was barely above the cut line(normal self-esteem ranges from 15-25). The classified students' score were:

16, 16, 12, 16, 22, 18, 18, 11, 15, 18, 12, and 16. The two students who scored an 11 and a 12 on the test are considered to have lower self- esteems. Although, they are only a few points away from being within the normal range, nonetheless their self-esteems are still considered low. The rest of the scores are within the normal range but tend to be lower on the scale of normalcy. The average score was 15.83.

When compared to the classified group the general education group was again all within the normal range, with the exception of two students, who scored above the normal range. The non-classified group's average score was 23.42 with a cut line of 25 for above normal. Their scores were 24, 18, 24, 18, 29, 18, 24, 24, 21, 25, 28, and 20. The two students who scored above normal were the two Gifted and Talented students who were tested. Comparing the opposite group's score it is clear that, again, although within the normal range, the average score for the non-classified group was significantly higher. In fact, the score is leaning towards higher than average self-esteem. The difference in the averages between the two groups is 7.59.

Comparing the answers to the questions in both groups there is not one clear explanation as to why there is such a significant difference in self-esteem. The classified group appeared to answer the questions with an unclear view of their self-esteem. While answering the survey questions, students in both groups would answer certain questions that if answered correctly, would yield a higher self-esteem. However, they would then answer other questions that if answered a particular way, would yield a lower self-esteem. Both groups' answers, more so the classified group, are not consistent and do not indicate answers that would declare a definite low or high self-esteem throughout the test. For example, some students would agree disagree to Question One which suggests that

they are equal to their peers, but agree to Question Seven that they are satisfied with themselves. The same issue can be seen with the opposite group. Students would strongly disagree to Question Nine, stating that they feel useless at times, but four students disagreed to Question Four that states that they are able to do things just as well as their peers. Analyzing the breakdown of the questions suggests that elementary school-aged students' self-esteem is still developing. They are able to communicate how they feel on certain issues, but are not aware of themselves as a whole. They are still at an impressionable age; where they can be easily influenced and then react strongly when peers do not accept them.

There could be several reasons as to why the results came out the way they did. However, when answering the original question, does being placed in a special education setting affect a student's self-esteem, the results would prove positive.

Discussion of Data and Literature

There have been over 11,000 studies done discussing the self-concept and self-esteem of students. In fact, some researchers argue that self-esteem is one of the most highly studied areas in education. Many of the studies that have been completed have yielded similar results to this study. After compiling data through observation and using teacher suggestions as to who would be best to participate in the study, twenty four students, twelve classified and twelve non-classified, were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The classified group had an average score of 15.83. The non-classified group had an average score of 23.42, a mean difference of 7.59 between both groups. The Rosenberg scale designates scores between 15 and 25 as having a normal self-esteem.

The scores indicate that the classified group's scores are extremely close to the normal cut line, while the other group is boarding above average.

Results such as these have been found in several of the studies carried out dealing with this topic. For example the study entitled, "Comparing the Self-Concept of Students With and Without Learning Disabilities" conducted by Kenny Gans and D.L Ghany (2003) had the following results: This study compared students with Learning Disabilities and students without Learning Disabilities in terms of self-concept. The hypothesis was that children with LD would score lower on the measurement scales than the nondisabled students. In addition, they also thought that children with LD would not differ in their global concept from children who were not classified as LD. The last prediction was that girls with LD would have lower self-concept than boys with LD.

The results of the study concluded that the researchers primary hypothesis was supported which was that children with LD scored significantly lower on the Piers Harris scale than students without LD. The second hypothesis, that students with LD would not have a lower global self-concept than their peers was also confirmed. This means that students with LD did not generalize their feelings of academic weakness to more generalized self-concept perceptions. However, the last hypothesis that girls would score lower than boys was proven false. There was no difference between boys with LD and girls with LD as far as self-concept was concerned.

Although this study included factors beyond this thesis, such as global self-concept and gender, the results did demonstrate that there was a significant difference in the self-concept of classified and non-classified students.

Another study that linked changes in self-concept and academic placement was a study entitled, “The Self-Perception of a Learning Disability and Its Relationship to Academic Self-Concept and Self-Esteem” carried out by W.B. Heyman (1990). This study was designed to determine whether self-perception of a learning disability was related to a student’s academic self-concept and self-esteem. According to the researchers, self-perception is defined as how the children view their learning problem, with particular emphasis on whether they understand it as delimited rather than global, modifiable rather than permanently limiting, and not stigmatizing.

The hypotheses were that LD students’ self-perception of their learning disability would be positively related to both academic self-concept and self-esteem. In addition, the researchers hypothesized that these relationships would remain significant after eliminating factors such as race, sex, age, class setting, etc.

The findings confirmed the belief that there was indeed a relationship between self-perception of a learning disability and academic self-concept and self-esteem. It was also hypothesized that these conclusions would remain the same after controlling for specific factors. The hypothesis was correct. The relationship remained the same.

The conclusions found in the study in this thesis, the studies discussed above, and the remaining studies in Chapter two may include or not include certain factors or use a different testing instrument, but all found similar results despite their differences: That there is a significant difference between the self-concept of classified and non-classified students. A topic like self-esteem linked with academic placement is important to evaluate as to make every student feel comfortable with their achievements and to make the most positive learning environment for all students.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

The following are some recommendations as to better carry out the study and to promote further research. Although the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale is a praiseworthy instrument and has yielded accurate results, the questions proved to be slightly difficult. The questions are worded in a first person style and change from positive statements about oneself to negative ones. It was found that while testing the younger students and, in most cases, the classified students the researcher needed to repeat or rephrase the questions several times. This could have perhaps altered the exact meaning or purpose of the questions, misleading the participants, and skewing the results. It was clear the after rephrasing the questions the students understood, but a test better suited to their levels would have possibly been more appropriate. Another way to test the students may be through simply interviewing them. The researcher would therefore be able to construct age and level appropriate questions and phrase them to yield appropriate results.

It is possible when answering these questions they may have trying to accommodate the researcher or answering the questions the way one of their peers had told them to once returning to the classroom. Another reason could be that they simply could not understand the questions. The difference in the answers could be that the general education group could better absorb the meaning whereas the classified group, because of their disability, could not understand the meaning, and therefore not answer it properly.

This study was a fairly non complex study to carry out. It had a simple hypothesis stating that there was a difference in the self-esteem between classified and non-classified students. There was also a fairly small population. The hypothesis was proved, and it was

assumed, like other studies, that the reason for the results was academic placement. With the studies non-complexity came a few problem areas. First, the population was extremely small and the participants were the researcher's students. If this study were to be done again it should include a much larger population and be carried out by a person not associated with the participants as to prevent biased answers.

The purpose of such studies is to, in time, improve the self-concepts of classified students. Make them aware that their academic placement has no bearing on them as a person. All factors contributing to these results should be taken into consideration and remedied as to improve self-concept.

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APPENDIX A
Parent Permission Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Collaborative Education program at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. David Hespe as part of my Master's thesis concerning how being placed in a special education setting affects one's self-concept. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. Students do not have to be classified to participate in the study as this is a comparison study between special education students and general education students. The goal of the study is to compare the self-concepts of both populations and see what factors contribute to the varied self-concepts. Once this information has been gathered, I will then conclude what can be done to remedy the situation those students with lower self-concepts.

Each child will be given a test known as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (see attached copy). It is a ten-question scale that measures self-esteem and is widely used in this field of study. The child will be completely aware of their participation in the study and how it will be used. The testing will remain anonymous and be done away from their peers. All information gathered will be viewed only by my thesis advisor and myself. No personally identifiable information will be recorded. Any child given permission to take part in the study does not have to participate if they decide not to.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. At the conclusion of the study a summary of the results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 856-906-9647 or you may contact Dr. David Hespe at 856-256-4702. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kristin Fastiggi

Please indicate whether or not you grant your child permission to participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher. You are free to withdraw your child from this study at any time. You will receive an executed copy of this form for your records.

_____ I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

Appendix B

Test

STATEMENT		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	